

INSPECTION REPORT

ST THOMAS CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Golborne, Warrington

LEA area: Wigan

Unique reference number: 106487

Headteacher: Mrs P Tinsley

Reporting inspector: Mr Jean-Pierre Kirkland

4483

Dates of inspection: 24 – 26 February 2003

Inspection number: 246601

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior and Infant
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	5 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Church Street Golborne Warrington
Postcode:	WA3 3TH
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend Robert Williams
Date of previous inspection:	January 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
4483	Jean-Pierre Kirkland	Registered inspector	Mathematics Music	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Key issues for action
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2200	James Stirrup	Team inspector	English Art and design Physical education	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
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30691	Kathleen Yates	Team inspector	Educational inclusion Science Geography History	Leadership and management

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Thomas's Church of England Primary School is voluntary aided and has 195 pupils on roll with considerably more girls than boys. There is a significant variation in the numbers on roll, varying from 18 in the reception class to 35 pupils in Years 3, 4 and 6. The school is situated in the south-west corner of the Borough and is located in the centre of a former coal mining area. Since the closure of the pit less than 20 years ago, there has been a serious decline in job opportunities locally, and the area is one of unfavourable socio-economic conditions. Almost 30 per cent of pupils are known to be entitled to receive free school meals; a figure above the national average. On entry to the reception class, children's general levels of attainment are very low, especially in literacy and numeracy. The number of pupils with special educational needs has almost doubled since the school was previously inspected. A very high proportion, nearly 60 per cent and three times the national average, is subsequently identified with a very wide range of special educational needs. These needs range from moderate learning difficulties to emotional and behavioural difficulties, and include pupils with speech and language problems and specific learning problems. The number of pupils who have Statements of Special Educational Need is well over three times the national average at 5.1 per cent. These pupils have difficulties that are profound and multiple, emotional, behavioural and physical, affecting their learning adversely. There are a significant number of pupils who transfer in or out of the school at times other than the normal entry or leaving points, causing some problems over continuity of education for those pupils. There are no pupils with English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Despite the very low standards in national tests, this is a good school. Pupils, the majority of whom have learning difficulties, make good progress overall, given their very low starting points. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, supported by a good, broad and interesting curriculum. Leadership and management are good with effective care and support systems in place. As a result, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- It provides good support and very good care for the large proportion of pupils with special educational needs who make good progress overall.
- Provision for children in the reception class is good and enables them to make a good start to their education.
- It provides a good and interesting curriculum, with good teaching and learning, set within a secure Christian framework where there is very good provision for moral and social development of pupils.
- It has very good links with the parents and local community.
- It provides good leadership and management with a shared determination to enable all pupils to succeed in their own way and to make good progress.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics and science throughout the school and in information and communication technology by the end of Year 6.
- Attendance, which is well below the national average, and the systems for improving attendance.
- Resources in some areas where the lack of them adversely affects learning.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall, improvement since the previous inspection in 1998 has been good. The school has maintained standards in science and a majority of other curriculum areas despite the doubling of pupils entering the school who are diagnosed as having special educational needs. Standards have declined in English and mathematics, where most pupils experience the greatest degree of difficulty. The key issues have been almost completely addressed. Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum has improved significantly, although an improvement in standards has yet to follow in the juniors. There is much better planning of the curriculum and there are no significant gaps in teachers'

knowledge. The amount and regularity of investigative work has improved and targets are used widely as a means of improving the rate of learning. Governors and subject leaders now take a more active and influential role in the management of the school. Other minor issues have been dealt with effectively, but there are still some areas that are under-resourced. Teaching and learning have improved and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. As a result of the progress made so far and the dedication and committed nature of governors and staff, the school is judged to have good capacity for further improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	E	E	E*	E*
Mathematics	E	E	E	D
Science	E	E*	E	E

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
Average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

Standards are very low in English and mathematics throughout the school, and are well below average in science. These standards are very similar to those recorded in last year's national tests for Year 6 pupils. However, despite the poor performance of pupils in tests and in their work, overall, achievement is good. The starting point for the vast majority of children when they enter the school is very low indeed. Many have great difficulty forming the simplest of sentences. Their understanding of numeracy is negligible. Social skills are very poor and communication is minimal at first. Through good provision, children soon settle down and begin to acquire some basic skills, especially in speaking, writing, reading and numeracy. Skills in ICT develop well so that by the end of Year 2, pupils are broadly in line with national averages. Results in the national tests for Year 2 pupils in 2002 were very low in reading, writing and mathematics. Teacher assessments in science showed standards to be well below average. When the 1998 national tests and 2002 national tests are compared, using only the pupils who were present for both, almost one quarter of pupils made better than expected progress. Set against an ever-increasing number of pupils entering the school with specific learning difficulties, achievement has been good. Standards remain very low in English and in the bottom five per cent of schools nationally. They were slightly better in mathematics and science for Year 6 pupils in the 2002 national tests. Inspectors found standards for the current groups of pupils in Years 2 and 6 to be broadly similar, with a slight improvement in science throughout the school. Standards are broadly average in other subjects and progress is good.

The targets set by the school are very realistic, being based on detailed and rigorous assessment of pupils. The current targets, which are an improvement on last year, are under constant review, especially since the school has a significant number of pupils entering and leaving each year.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils like school, enjoy their work and concentrate very well on their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and at play. There has been one, recent temporary exclusion.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils learn well in an atmosphere of good support with teachers knowing their pupils extremely well and helping them to learn effectively.
Attendance	Poor. It is well below the national average and a cause for concern. Punctuality is also unsatisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school and no unsatisfactory practice was observed. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning in the reception class are good and form a firm foundation for the acquisition of basic skills. Planning is good and covers the full range of opportunities expected for children of this age. There is good early recognition of children with learning difficulties and remedial action is swift and effective. This good provision continues throughout the rest of the school. Teachers plan for pupils to learn basic skills and ensure that the levels of support are in place to help those with special problems. Classes are very well managed and well structured, with many good opportunities for group work and appropriate opportunities for investigative work. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is good and the support assistants play a vital role in helping the large numbers of pupils with learning difficulties to improve their performance, especially in reading, writing, speaking and numeracy. Progress is good towards the carefully and well-written targets on the individual education plans. Pupils are learning basic skills in ICT more effectively since the introduction of the new suite a year ago and recent teacher training. Teachers have high expectations of good self-discipline and, as a result, no time is lost correcting unacceptable behaviour. Instances of very good teaching occur when learning challenges are high and the group work is very closely matched to each pupil's needs. In these instances, learning is accelerated and the lessons progress at a more rapid pace.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad and interesting to pupils. It meets statutory requirements fully and is enhanced well by a good range of visits, community involvement and extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good with some very good features. Support assistants are very good and fully briefed to enable pupils with literacy and numeracy problems to tackle these effectively and head on. The school fully meets the new legal requirements.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school provides a strong backcloth for learning through good spiritual and cultural provision and very good moral provision and social opportunities. Satisfactory provision is made to counter any incidents of racism.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall with some very good features. Child protection and health and safety issues are dealt with very effectively. The school is a safe and secure environment. Assessment procedures are good and used appropriately to improve learning. Children are cared for well as they transfer from play groups or nurseries.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Very good. The school keeps parents well informed of all school-based issues, from social events through to new curricular initiatives. A good number of parents are involved in helping the school to raise money through social events, as well as helping in the learning process in classrooms.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher and staff share a common purpose of providing good quality education for all pupils, and good support for pupils who have special educational needs.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors have a very good overview of the strengths and areas for improvement and support the work of the school well. They fulfil their statutory duties very effectively and are proud of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There are effective systems in place to ensure that teaching and learning are looked at with a view to improvement. The school has a good set of priorities to guide its work and takes full account of the need to spend its money wisely and carefully.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school uses its accommodation and staffing well and targets those areas where there are most need. There are insufficient resources in some areas, such as science, English, ICT and music, and this has an adverse effect on learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching, learning and progress.• The leadership and management.• The way the school enables pupils who come in midway through the year to settle in well.• Children like coming to school where there is a high expectation of hard work by them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Higher standards and a better position in the league tables.• More extra-curricular activities.• The amount of homework.

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. Inspectors also agree with parents that standards in the school are very low. However, the inspection team recognise that the starting point of many pupils is very low indeed, especially in terms of literacy and numeracy, and this goes a long way in explaining the low standards by Year 6. During their time at the school, pupils are judged to make good progress and that the value added to pupils' learning is, therefore, good. The range and quantity of extra-curricular activities, and the contribution they make to pupils' learning, are also judged to be good. However, it is recognised by inspectors that there are far fewer opportunities in this area for the younger pupils. Homework is judged to be satisfactory overall.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- **Standards are very low in English and mathematics throughout the school, and are well below average in science. These standards are very similar to those recorded in last year's national tests. Since the previous inspection, standards in some subjects have fallen, noticeably in English, whereas in others they have risen, such as science and music. This is a reflection of the changing nature of the pupils who attend the school.**

Strengths include:

1. **Achievement is good overall, despite the poor performance of pupils in tests and in their work.** The starting point for the vast majority of children when they enter the school is very low indeed. Many have great difficulty forming the simplest of sentences. Their understanding of numeracy is negligible. Social skills are very poor and communication is minimal at first. Through good provision, children soon settle down and begin to acquire some basic skills, especially in speaking, writing, reading and numeracy. When the 1998 national tests and 2002 national tests are compared, using only the pupils who were present for both, almost one quarter of pupils made better than expected progress. This shows that higher attaining pupils are making good progress throughout the school. Standards remain very low in English, but were slightly better in mathematics and science for Year 6 pupils in the 2002 national tests. Inspectors found standards for the current groups of pupils in Years 2 and 6 to be broadly similar, but with a slight improvement in science throughout the school. Despite these low standards, progress measured in terms of specific targets on the individual education plans for the 30 per cent or so of pupils with these is good. Pupils are given good support in areas of specific difficulty, such as speaking, listening and communication. Teachers get pupils to repeat words and sounds, or to follow the text, even extending this good practice to following the lines of hymns in assemblies. There is good attention paid in helping pupils to write more clearly, even though some are unable to form their letters correctly when they start Year 1. Good focus is placed on improving punctuation and spelling, which many pupils find hard, going for a phonetic version rather than a correct one. In mathematics, there is good emphasis placed on learning the basic skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Many pupils find this hard, as their poor writing skills interfere with the way they arrange columns or rows of figures. Mistakes are frequent. In science throughout the school, pupils find the technical terms difficult. Many of the lower attainers are still unsure of words such as 'transparent' and 'opaque' and cannot attempt to spell them without help. Progress over time is good as pupils recognise and learn how to record their findings. They learn the principles of prediction, using and consolidating prior learning in mathematics, for example. In science and mathematics, pupils have poor retention and memory, and often learning today is hazy tomorrow. Given the linguistic difficulties that many pupils experience, they fall down again in national tests when they have to interpret or investigate, as a significant number are not certain of what is required.
2. **Achievement in most other subjects is good. In history and geography it is very good.** In other subjects, pupils achieve well given the low starting points. By Year 6, standards are broadly average across the curriculum in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education. In ICT, due largely to good quality staff training, a newly planned curriculum and the acquisition of a new

computer suite a year ago, pupils are making better progress and consolidating basic skills from an earlier age. Standards are now broadly average by the end of Year 2 and progress is good. Older pupils still have a lack of basic skills, and standards are not so high and below average by Year 6. However, progress on the new machines, and understanding how they function is good. In geography and history, pupils make very good progress in developing their skills of investigation, map work and research. Although written work is still poor, pupils have good knowledge and understanding of such things as the Tudor period or National Parks.

3. **Target setting by the school is good.** The targets set by the school are very realistic, being based on detailed and rigorous assessment of pupils. The current targets, which are an improvement on last year, are under constant review, especially since the school has a significant number of pupils entering and leaving each year. Teachers assess their pupils regularly, both for progress and standards. They know their pupils well, and can, therefore, be very realistic as well as challenging. Targets are appropriate given the current ability levels in Year 6.

Areas of weakness include:

4. **Children's basic skills on entry to the school are very low.** Despite attendance at play groups or nurseries before entering the school, children have very poorly developed skills generally. Their communication skills are very low and a few children are hardly able to speak when they first come to school. Few children annually reach the expected levels in any of the areas of learning when they enter Year 1. This year, however, where the attainment is somewhat higher than normal, a few children, in the region of one quarter, are likely to reach the expected levels by the start of Year 1.
5. **Pupils perform to a poor standard in national tests in Years 2 and 6 in English, mathematics and science.** Results in the national tests for Year 2 pupils in 2002 were very low in reading, writing and mathematics. Teacher assessments in science showed standards to be well below average. The Year 6, 2002 national test results in English were in the bottom five per cent of schools nationally. In mathematics and science, results were slightly better, but still well below average. Inspectors found very low standards in English in the current Year 6 class. Despite the best efforts of teachers, pupils have poor retention and forget basic principles such as spelling and punctuation very quickly. Most have great difficulty with comprehension and reading levels are also low. Staff place a clear focus on helping pupils to interpret questions, for instance, when applying their mathematics to problem solving exercises. Despite this, some pupils in Year 6 still fail to understand what is required by a specific question on a national test paper and, as a result, they arrive at the wrong answer. A similar situation occurs in science, where applied knowledge and investigation is a relative weakness for most pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- **Pupils' attitudes to school and their work continue to be very good, as at the last inspection. Good behaviour has been maintained with very good personal development showing improvement. Attendance, in contrast, is significantly worse than it was previously.**

The main strengths are:

6. **Pupils' attitudes and enthusiasm for school and work help them to achieve the best they can.** When asked, almost all pupils say they enjoy coming to school. They are very purposeful during the registration period. They settle well, working independently on various activities, making a valuable addition to their learning and

progress in lessons. In the reception class, children settle down well and begin to develop good listening skills. They form very good relationships with one another, aiding their personal and social development well. Elsewhere in the school, good teaching means pupils are interested in their learning, concentrate well and work hard on the tasks set for them. In a mathematics lesson in Year 6 using percentages related to real life, pupils' concentration was very good, so no time was wasted and progress was good. Similarly in a Year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils were very keen to learn and were well focused on the number work they were given to do, concentrating well and trying very hard. The flourishing school council, with class representatives from throughout the school, has engaged pupils' imagination in contributing to improvements for the playground. Pupils have responded eagerly and enthusiastically with their ideas, using their very good levels of initiative to make suggestions for changes. Clubs and activities offered outside lessons are very well attended and appreciated by the pupils and enhance social and cultural development effectively.

7. **Very good relationships build on children's confidence so they work very productively in the classroom.** The caring ethos of the school, built on its Christian foundation, forms the basis for the very good relationships that exist throughout the school. In some lessons pupils lack confidence in speaking and do not readily express their ideas and views. However, all are given very good support and encouragement and children's self-esteem is lifted so they respond positively, eager to produce good work. In a Year 2 music lesson with lots of praise and encouragement, pupils worked well together playing notes on groups of musical instruments, developing the confidence to allow them to successfully explore their creativity. Pupils like their teachers and trust them to give them the support they need. They like working with each other in pairs and small groups, successfully sharing resources and ideas and generously appreciating each other's efforts, such as in many gymnastics lessons where team spirit is built up successfully. Older pupils give very effective and enthusiastic support to younger pupils, listening to them read each morning and acting as play leaders at lunchtime. This provides an excellent contribution to learning and personal development.
8. **Good behaviour by most pupils enhances the quality of learning.** There are very few incidents of unacceptable behaviour in the school. Pupils understand the school's code of conduct and what is expected of them so in most lessons very little time is lost through poor behaviour. Learning is purposeful with at least good and often very good behaviour contributing effectively to very productive and enjoyable lessons. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, pupils responded keenly to the teacher's questioning and worked successfully on their own and in groups, allowing the teacher to provide individual attention where needed. High levels of concentration and excellent behaviour by pupils mean assemblies, and particularly hymn practices, give a great deal of enjoyment and pleasure as pupils learn, with some success, about rhythm and singing together. In the playground pupils are well integrated with all children engaged in activity groups. There is no separate area for the reception children, but the comparatively large playground means older and more boisterous pupils do not interfere with the play of younger pupils.

There is one area in need of improvement:

9. **Rates of attendance are well below the levels for other similar schools nationally.** Levels of attendance have declined significantly since the previous inspection with a significant minority of pupils regularly arriving late to school. Attendance levels are well below the national average and this has a negative effect on interrupting the process of learning for this group of pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- **Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Twenty per cent of lessons were judged as very good, 49 per cent judged as good and the remainder judged as satisfactory. No unsatisfactory practice was observed.**

Strengths in the teaching and learning include:

10. **Teaching and learning in the reception class are good.** This forms a secure foundation for the children to begin to acquire the basic skills of communication and numeracy as well as social skills. Planning is good and covers the full range of opportunities expected for children of this age. There is good emphasis placed on learning speech and communication skills, with many opportunities to speak and listen; for example, to stories or explanations by teaching staff. There is good early recognition of children with learning difficulties. Over one half of the class are currently being helped with one specific problem or another, such as speech and communication, or very poor recognition of numbers or letters. For example, in a literacy lesson, only one half of the class were able to write their own names successfully, with one third not getting beyond the initial letter. In another lesson related to a 'Bear Hunt' activity, the support assistant provided good support for two pupils with more severe learning problems in order to help them to understand the story and to develop their language skills. This swift and effective remedial action is responsible for children getting the right help very early on, and it enables them to make better progress in their learning.
11. **Good provision for all pupils with learning difficulties is made throughout the school.** Teachers plan for pupils to learn basic skills and ensure that there are good levels of support in place to help those with special educational problems in the rest of the school. The majority of pupils in almost every class have some form of special educational need. Individual education plans are referred to constantly by teachers and support staff. These are carefully scripted and have good attainable and measurable targets. In some cases, additional information and more specialised targets have been added through consultation with the educational psychologist and other visiting specialists. These good quality devices are essential in the learning process. Most of the pupils seen and talked to value the support they receive. Staff are patient and caring and understand their needs well. Teachers are very careful to get their pupils to consolidate their learning through deeper questioning, such as, 'How do you know?' or 'How did you arrive at that answer?' in Years 3 and 6 mathematics. Pupils are forced to think and, as a result, have improved chances of remembering next time, given that their retention skills are poor. Support assistants are very well briefed and deployed by teachers, and their precious time is used to full effect. Good use is made of available space to teach small groups who, separated from others, are able to learn better in a smaller, more productive environment.
12. **Classes are very well managed and well structured, with many good opportunities for group work and appropriate opportunities for investigative work.** Teachers plan lessons to include a wide range of learning strategies, to help meet the varying needs appropriately. There is time for good quality questioning at the start of many lessons. In Year 1 physical education, the teacher ensured that pupils were fully aware of the importance of doing a warm-up exercise or two before beginning to stretch muscles. Similarly, in a junior hymn practice for Years 3 to 6, all pupils were made to warm up by breathing deeply and adopting the correct posture before they stretched their vocal chords. In a Year 1 lesson on homes, higher attaining pupils were able to be more creative and draw sketches of their own houses, whilst

others who were not at this level could work with shapes in order to improve their drawing skills, which in most cases is poor. Pupils are now learning basic skills in ICT more effectively since the introduction of the new suite a year ago and recent teacher training. Standards are broadly average by Year 2, and pupils in this class are now competent at accessing information, using different programs such as 'paint', and some are able to edit their work. Teachers have focused well on ensuring that these younger pupils have acquired the basic skills, especially since few of them have access to computers at home. In other parts of the school, there is a good balance between investigating, listening, watching and practical activities. This wide range of strategies improves overall accessibility to learning for a broader range of pupils, given the spread of learning difficulties in each class. The visual impact of seeing patterns emerging from colouring in number sequences helps to consolidate such things as tens and units or odd and even numbers. Listening to sounds helps others to become more aware of what is going on around them. Cutting and pasting in design and technology helps those with poor finger or hand control to improve, so they learn more effectively in music, as they have learnt to hold an instrument correctly. Levels of homework are satisfactory overall.

13. **Teaching of literacy and numeracy is good** and the support assistants play a vital role in helping the large numbers of pupils with learning difficulties to improve their performance, especially in reading, writing, speaking and numeracy. Progress is good towards the carefully and well-written targets on the individual education plans. Small groups work very successfully with support assistants under the direction of the teacher. In Year 2, for example, a small group made very good progress when learning rhyming words ending in 'ed' by being given special focused attention, with the tasks broken down into small, challenging steps. Teachers question pupils well and put good examples of working out on the board for pupils to see. This is particularly effective in mathematics, where the solution is broken down stage by stage into a number of steps. In English and other subject areas, in order to extend and broaden vocabulary, teachers print in large letters key words or technical terms to act as a constant reminder to pupils throughout the lesson and, sometimes, for the whole week.
14. **Teachers have high expectations of good self-discipline.** As a result, no time is lost correcting unacceptable behaviour. Generally pupils listen well and follow instructions effectively. They share equipment fairly in mathematics and science lessons, their learning in physical education following demonstrations of good practice and they are eager to talk to visitors about their learning, and do so in a controlled and polite manner. The good behaviour in lessons and sense of good discipline that pupils carry with them are instrumental in raising the rates of learning.
15. **Teachers have good subject knowledge** and use this very effectively when questioning pupils. In a Year 5 design and technology lesson on food preparation, the teacher skilfully allowed pupils to share ideas, wrote down their suggestions and ensured that they all took part. Language levels were raised as pupils learnt new technical terms such as 'carbohydrates' or 'savoury'. Similarly, in a Year 4 science lesson, the teacher focused effectively on raising pupils' awareness of language and technical terms, successfully introducing connecting words such as 'skeleton', 'muscles' and 'bones', essential to understanding the functions of parts of the human body. These strategies are particularly valuable in extending the knowledge and understanding of the higher attaining pupils.

An area for improvement is:

16. **Sometimes, there is insufficient rigour and challenge in lessons.** Just occasionally, the pace of some lessons slackens too early and the momentum is lost. Pupils become a little fidgety. This is because the work set for some groups has been too easy for them or in other cases, too difficult. This affects only a very few pupils in each class, reflecting the very specific learning difficulties within each classroom. Teaching in these lessons remains satisfactory as the majority of pupils stay on task throughout. The problem occurs for the very few who manage to grasp a concept very quickly or get a long way behind, and the pace of their learning slackens.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

- **The school provides pupils with a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. The school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision supports the curriculum very well and helps to foster a very good learning environment. The areas for concern and improvement identified in the previous report have been addressed.**

The main strengths are:

17. **The school fulfils all statutory requirements and responds to all areas of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.** The curriculum for literacy and numeracy is composed of medium-term plans provided by the local education authority with the school using commercial schemes of work for science and all other subjects. These provide relevant and good opportunities for pupils to extend and make progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Lower attaining pupils are given additional curricular support, through national strategies, including Early Years Support, Additional Literacy Support and Further Literacy Support.
18. The curriculum provided for pupils is well planned, organised and managed. Regular opportunities are given for subject leaders to check on the curriculum in English, mathematics and science, with other subjects being monitored on a rolling programme. The headteacher monitors the whole curriculum effectively through lesson observations and the sampling of pupils' work. Pupils in the reception class receive an imaginative and challenging curriculum, which enables them to make progress in their learning of basic skills and prepares them for the onset of the National Curriculum. The curriculum is further enhanced by the many opportunities pupils are given, including those for children in the reception class, to reflect and think about what they are doing. Pupils are amazed at times when creating pictures using the computer or discovering how the human body works in science. Good quality assemblies reinforce this spiritual dimension, which is a strength of the school. Equally important is the strong moral code that pervades the school. It is known and understood by all, including parents who approve strongly. Due to the smooth way in which pupils move around, treat each other and their equipment with respect, and tolerate others' ideas, a stronger more effective learning environment is created for the benefit of all.
19. **All pupils have equality of access to the curriculum.** The school responds fully to the new legal requirements for pupils with special educational needs. All pupils have detailed individual education plans, which provide clear and detailed targets and strategies for improvement. Currently the school does not have a register of gifted and talented pupils, although higher attaining pupils achieve well across the curriculum through work that is matched effectively to meet their needs. The school governors have suitable policies for sex education and drugs awareness. These two important areas of the curriculum are addressed within science and the school's personal social

and health education programme, with a specific focus in Years 5 and 6. The school has good links with its feeder high school through the Lowton and Golborne Schools Association. This involves pupils taking part in a transition project that they start in the primary school and complete in the high school. They also take part in taster days at the high school of their choice. This ensures a smooth transition between the two stages of education.

20. **The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities.** These include netball and football, a school choir and a very popular French Club for pupils in Year 6. The school also benefits from its involvement with the 'Wigan Out Of School Learning Programme', which provides the school with valuable funds for a range of extra-curricular activities. These were used last year for the creation of a large Chinese dragon and the celebration of the Chinese New Year. These activities, when combined with a good range of visitors and educational visits, including a residential holiday for pupils in Years 5 and 6, provide pupils with an enriched and extended curriculum. This good range and the frequent and very good opportunities for social and cultural development within the curriculum, enhance learning very effectively. In almost all lessons, pupils are given opportunities to discuss and debate, or to work together in small groups. They learn and practise the essential skills of co-operation and collaboration while working; for instance, on projects in geography, science or composing in music. Inspectors acknowledge that currently, there are few opportunities for younger pupils to take part in clubs.

Area for development:

21. **The school does not have any specific policies or strategies for the development of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.** Since pupils' performances in both subjects are well below average, it is important that these two areas are not left to chance. Generally teachers use good strategies to raise awareness of issues that link different areas of the curriculum, but the absence of a policy causes some inconsistencies and results in some missed opportunities. This is especially disadvantageous for those pupils who have poorer memory retention.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- **As at the last inspection this area of the school is good with some very good features.**

The main strengths are:

22. **Good support and guidance helps all pupils work and learn effectively.** Parents place a high value on the care and support the school provides for their children. In turn the pupils feel their teachers know them well and are confident that they will respond supportively to requests for help. The school provides a sensitive and friendly environment in which all staff successfully and consistently co-operate well. They successfully promote the development of pupils' individual confidence and self-esteem that enable children to achieve well. The high percentage of pupils with special educational needs are well supported. Teachers know the pupils well; they are able to track their progress successfully and, as a result, make best use of support staff. Home visits and a very good and welcoming induction programme, involving parents and children, mean children settle well into the reception class. Close links with high schools help older pupils to look positively on the next stage of their education. A suitable programme of health education helps pupils mature and learn about responsible behaviour.

23. **Effective procedures ensure pupils behave well.** Good behaviour ensures lessons are productive and enjoyable. Successful procedures mean there is only a small minority of lessons that are disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils recognise that bullying is not tolerated and are reassured that it will be dealt with quickly and effectively. Meaningful assemblies developed themes to help pupils discuss and think about relationships and moral dilemmas.
24. **Very good child protection and health and safety procedures ensure safety of pupils.** Strong working relationships with local agencies support the school's very effective practice in ensuring individual pupils are given the specific support they need. The close working relationships between staff and regular updated training mean staff awareness and sensitivity are high. Health and safety requirements are carried out effectively.
25. **Assessment procedures are good and are used appropriately to influence progress and standards.** The school has worked hard since the previous inspection to improve teachers' recording of how pupils are learning in lessons; this had been identified as an issue in the previous inspection. Marking in books is generally appropriate. The procedures for recording pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science are now good. Procedures for recording pupils' achievement in other areas of the curriculum are still being developed but recording documents are in place. The school tracks and records pupils' individual performances throughout the school, using various nationally recognised tests. From the information, teachers set targets for pupils to reach by the end of the school year. These targets are monitored halfway through the year, to ensure pupils are progressing well enough and, if necessary, additional support is given to help pupils further.
26. **There are good assessment procedures in place in the reception year.** These are used effectively to record the personal and social development of the children. However, this is not carried out in a formal way throughout the rest of the school. The good assessment in reception enables early problems to be identified and appropriate support given. Currently, half the children in the class have been placed on the school's special educational needs list, with some needing significant additional help, especially in literacy and numeracy.

The areas for improvement are:

27. **Monitoring and recording of attendance is insufficiently rigorous.** Attendance at the school is unsatisfactory and well below the national average. Registers are completed on a regular basis, but reasons for absence are not always effectively and efficiently followed up. There is no procedure to follow up pupils on the first day of absence or ensure that they regularly arrive at school on time. However, very good support is provided through the school's links with the educational welfare officer who comes into school on a monthly basis. She talks to pupils in assemblies to remind them of the importance of coming to school. Weekly awards are given to the class with the best attendance to encourage regular attendance.
28. **There are very few responsibilities for younger pupils.** Opportunities for older pupils to take responsibility in school are very effective. For younger pupils this is less effective as opportunities are significantly more limited.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- **Parents' views of the school are strongly supportive of its work. There is a very effective partnership with parents who support the school well and make appropriate contributions towards their children's learning. There has been a significant strengthening of this area since the previous inspection.**

The main strengths are:

29. **There is strong parental satisfaction with the school's provision.** The school has the overwhelming support of parents. The results of the pre-inspection questionnaire and parents meeting' show that parents feel the school is doing a very good job in the education and support of their children. They are very comfortable about going into school to ask for advice or help and feel the school keeps them up to date on how well their child is doing. They feel it is a listening school with a very good welcoming atmosphere. Teaching is seen as good and encourages their children to work hard and to do their best. They value the care and sensitivity of staff and praise the help given to pupils admitted to school other than at the usual time.
30. **The commitment of the school to an inclusive partnership with parents.** At the very earliest stages and before children enter reception, parents are encouraged to come into school and find out about the school. This is supported by an excellent 'new intake' brochure. The school has a truly, open-door policy and welcomes parents to share issues of concern. Many parents bring their children into school in the morning, and during the inspection were frequently to be seen chatting to staff about their children and school issues. Parents whose children have any form of special educational need play an effective part in the planning and review of their child. They also become very involved when their children are offered pastoral support programmes to help them to cope better in school. Information is welcoming and friendly and well supported by a home-school agreement with the two-way commitment to the support and development of their child.
31. **The opportunities the school provides to enable parental involvement in their child's education are very good.** A very good range of initiatives helps parents to share in contributing to their child's education as well as impacting significantly on pupils' learning, behaviour and personal development. Home visits are offered to all parents of children starting school as the first positive step in the partnership with each individual parent. This is followed by an excellent series of afternoons in school for new children and their parents to share and learn about the curriculum and to get to know the staff. Every parent, or in some instances, grandparents, of the new intake attended these very successful sessions. In addition, all parents are invited to further useful sessions, partly shared with their children, on literacy and numeracy, with plans to extend this to information and communication technology. A very positive consequence of these sessions is the significant impact on the quality of learning. A significant number of parents effectively support staff in the school; for instance, by hearing pupils read or assisting in practical lessons. A very active parent teachers association performs a valuable social and educational function.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- **The school is well led and effectively managed. There is a good focus on raising standards and much very good supportive work done for the pupils with special educational needs. The quality of leadership and management has improved since the school was last inspected, especially the role and function of subject leaders.**

Strengths are:

32. **There is a good strong leadership and management role played by the headteacher and deputy, with very good support from governors.** The headteacher is highly regarded by governors, staff, parents and children. She provides good leadership in a school that is a shining example of a very caring Christian ethos. She is ably supported by her deputy and other senior staff and together they consider good teamwork to be the key to the success of this school and this is indeed the case. All governors and staff are committed to providing the best education for the pupils, many of whom have learning difficulties. Staff with management responsibilities perform their duties well. The headteacher allocates time for them to carry out their subject leadership roles and they are rigorous in their use of this time to constantly ensure that pupils are being provided with a curriculum that best meets their needs. The school has a clear view of its situation and where it needs to go next.
33. **Governors contribute substantially to the effectiveness of the school.** Governors are very caring and thorough in their approach and contribute well to the good progress pupils make. They have a very good understanding of the strengths of the school and work together very well to raise standards. Since the last inspection, they have become more involved in order to prioritise their spending better. This enables them to seize opportunities when they arise, such as bidding successfully for money towards the ICT suite, which is well used to enhance pupils' learning. They have an excellent relationship with the headteacher who is fully accountable to them. Governors, in turn, account well to the parents of the school. They are active and keep themselves very well informed about what is going on in the school.
34. **The school evaluates its performance well.** The school makes good use of information received about pupils' abilities when they start school and also that from tests at the end of Years 2 and 6. The school's priorities and targets are effective and linked with clear programmes of action that always have the intention of raising standards for all pupils in all areas. All staff make good use of data analysis and ensure that appropriate targets are set and constantly reviewed. Since the last inspection, which highlighted the need for the curriculum to be monitored more effectively, the headteacher and subject leaders now look carefully at colleagues' planning in their specialist areas, searching for ways of improving this and relating it closely to the needs of the children. Staff new to the school are very well supported and, as a result, make a more immediate impact upon pupils' learning.
35. **The school's spending decisions relate very well to priorities for improvement and benefit for pupils.** The number and qualifications of the teaching staff are well matched to the needs of the curriculum. The use of learning support assistants, many of whom are undergoing valuable training to increase their skills, is very effective in enabling all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, to make good progress. Spending decisions show that the school is very aware of the need to continually provide pupils with good learning opportunities. For example, pupils now enjoy the use

of the new ICT suite, which is helping them to become more proficient in their ICT skills.

36. **Systems for managing finance are good and promote efficiency and effectiveness.** The budget is very strictly managed each year, with governors making a critical, yet important, contribution. Before work is done, tasks are scrutinised carefully and tenders are considered meticulously. Governors take great pride in their school and will not accept second best. The head is thus assured of a good system of quality control. Governors always seek best possible value for money when spending and the school does its best to ascertain the impact of such spending on improving standards and provision overall. In an old crumbling building, where there is always one problem after another, governors are vigilant in ensuring that pupils have an improved environment in which to work. Recent spending on the new computer suite, improved toilets and additional work spaces has all been for the benefit of the pupils, with a view to raising standards. The school is also very careful to ensure that all monies for pupils with special educational needs are appropriately spent. This being the case, pupils with specific needs benefit greatly from the large number of support assistants who help to raise the levels of their learning so effectively.

There is one area for improvement.

37. **The school is still short of resources in some areas.** This was identified as an area for improvement in the previous inspection report. Much of the recent spending has been targeted appropriately towards the great improvements in ICT. However, this and other areas still have some shortages, impacting adversely on learning. For instance, in science and music, the school shares resources with the local high school because it does not have sufficient resources of its own to support pupils' learning. In physical education, too, there are shortages of mats and benches with pupils having to wait their turn or share. Despite the recent spending in ICT, there are still insufficient probes and sensors for pupils to link their ICT work to science.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

38. In order to improve standards and educational provision, the school should now:

- (1) seek more ways of improving standards in work across the school and in national tests in the following subjects:
 - in English, by:
 1. providing more frequent opportunities for writing and for writing for different purposes across the curriculum;
 2. providing more frequent opportunities for pupils to read whole texts as a class;
 3. developing a policy to ensure that literacy is extended across the curriculum. (paragraphs 1, 5, 21, 54, 55, 56)
 - in mathematics by:
 1. focusing for longer periods of time more continuously on teaching and learning the basic skills of numeracy to help those pupils with poor retention skills;
 2. continuing to give pupils as much practice as possible at questions that involve problem solving and interpretation;
 3. developing a policy to ensure that numeracy skills are fully developed in other areas of the curriculum. (paragraphs 1, 5, 21, 61, 62)
 - in science by improving the quantity and quality of resources to help pupils to learn more effectively through investigation. (paragraphs 5, 37, 67)
 - in ICT in Years 3 to 6 by:
 1. giving pupils opportunities to use emails as a form of communication;
 2. ensuring sensors and probes are used in the teaching. (paragraphs 2, 82, 83)
- (2) improve attendance and punctuality by:
 - continuing to work closely with those families who have poor attendance and punctuality records;
 - ensuring current procedures for improving attendance include contacting absentees on their first day of absence. (paragraphs 9, 27)
- (3) auditing and assessing current resources to identify areas of shortage, especially in those areas highlighted in this report in science, ICT, music and physical education. (paragraphs 37, 67, 83, 89)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	45
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	0	9	22	14	0	0	0
Percentage	0	20	49	31	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	195
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	58

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	10
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	112

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	14	17	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	15	15	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	48 (65)	48 (68)	61 (68)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	15	21	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	48 (61)	68 (68)	55 (55)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	23	10	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	17	20	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	52 (50)	61 (50)	73 (63)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	19	21	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	58 (47)	64 (50)	67 (50)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	189	1	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20:1
Average class size	27.7

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	146

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	471,331
Total expenditure	483,014
Expenditure per pupil	2,379
Balance brought forward from previous year	36,690
Balance carried forward to next year	25,007

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	195
Number of questionnaires returned	45

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	42	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	47	4	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	58	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	51	13	2	2
The teaching is good.	58	42	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	38	7	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	29	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	38	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	51	44	4	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	53	42	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	44	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	40	20	2	7

Other issues raised by parents

- Concern over whether the school was scheduled for closure.
- Concern over why the school is so low in the league tables.
- Praise for the way the school helps latecomers to settle in effectively.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

- **The overall provision for the education of reception age children is good. This good standard has been maintained since the previous inspection. When considering that the number of children with special educational needs has doubled, it shows that the school has accommodated this change extremely well and continues to provide a good education for all its reception year children.**

Strengths in this provision are:

39. **Very good preparations are made for the children before they start the reception year.** Very good liaison procedures with parents and carers are in place. The reception teacher visits the homes of the parents of the new children to discuss procedures and expectations. Parents and their children visit the school on four occasions in the term prior to the new children joining the school. This gives both parents and children an opportunity to sample and see the activities and organisation of the reception classroom and adjoining learning and play areas. The parents and staff in the reception class build up good relationships and these are extended throughout the reception year. This good partnership makes a positive contribution to the good learning and progress that the children make. A further strong link exists with the play group located in the school, but managed as a separate entity. Staff keep in regular contact and children already have a very good 'feel' for the 'proper school' proper when they transfer to the reception class, having been housed opposite for the year. Most children in the play group transfer to the reception class.
40. **Children make a good start to their education in the reception year, with good overall management and leadership.** The majority of the children experience some pre-school activities in either nursery or play group settings, prior to joining the reception year. However, a small group of children do not have these pre-school experiences. The attainment on entering the reception year varies considerably, but overall, it is very low compared to that expected for children of this age. The children make good progress during their time in the reception and make good and some very good gains in new learning in all the six areas of learning of the curriculum. One quarter of the children are on course to meet the expected levels by the time they leave reception this year. This is higher than in most recent years. Overall, the attainment on leaving the reception year, even though it has improved, is still well below that expected for children of that age.
41. **There is good quality direct teaching and support given that enables children to learn well.** The standard of teaching is never less than good and in two observed lessons it was very good. The teacher, nursery nurse and classroom assistant make a very good team. They work closely together, sharing the objectives of each lesson and making sure that children both learn and enjoy the activities they do. All three staff members worked together to produce the school policy for early years education and the nursery nurse and assistant continue to develop their roles by attending regular training courses. This is making a positive contribution to the children's development and their learning. The classroom environment, prepared to look its best by the staff, is very good considering the age and shape of the classroom. The class teacher has a good understanding of the social, emotional and educational needs of the children with one half of the children having special educational needs in the current class. The teacher and assistants have a pleasant, helpful and encouraging manner with the

children, and readily celebrate the work the children achieve. The planning for lessons is matched to the needs of the children and a full range of activities is provided. The needs of the lower and well below average attaining children are catered for better than the potentially higher attainers. The class teacher is now developing strategies to ensure that all children are adequately challenged and reach their full potential. Procedures for recording how well children are doing are good. Very good and informative records are kept on both children's academic progress and achievement and their personal and social development. These records are passed on to the next teacher when the children complete their reception year.

42. **There is a good response made by the children in lessons.** As a result of the teacher's well-organised and managed lessons and activities, the children have positive attitudes and behave well. They listen carefully to their teachers and the assistants and are very keen to tackle tasks set for them. They work well on their own and are given many opportunities to work co-operatively in pairs and groups; this helps to develop the children socially. They respond well to reminders about remaining on task and they are aware of the school's code for good behaviour. The children are happy in seeking advice from all adults in the class, are keen to please and are well motivated. Considering that many of the children have special educational needs they interact very well together, helping each other if a need arises.

- **The standards being achieved in all areas of learning:**

Personal, social and emotional development:

43. From a low, initial level of development children are making good progress. They have settled well into school life. They have learnt how to respect one another's views and interact well as a social group. They work happily together in pairs or in groups and respond well when asked to do things in their work or play. They ask for help where needed and readily tidy up after the activities they do. They are building a sound sense of what is right and wrong and their behaviour is good. They show respect to their teacher and assistants, responding well to the care and help they receive. Generally they have a good attitude to school and they are encouraged to become personally independent by coming into the classroom on their own, leaving their parents at the door. Many of the children do this, but their confidence is still at an early stage of development. Even when considering the good progress the children make, they are likely to be below the expected level in this area of learning, by the end of the reception year.

Communication, language and literacy:

44. Many of the children enter the school with poor speaking and listening skills. They make good progress when the teacher encourages children to talk about the work they have completed, or seeks the children's views and ideas. However, more opportunities should be provided for children to give their own ideas and not be always led directly. At present the children do not speak with confidence and need much reassurance. Children of all levels of learning really enjoy the stories they hear in their literacy lessons. They responded with interest and enthusiasm as the teacher read the story, 'We're Going On A Bear Hunt'. They learnt the sequence of the story and readily joined in with real excitement saying the recurring theme, 'We're going to catch a big one'. Most of the children now form their letters correctly and one half write their full names, but the majority has writing skills that are still underdeveloped for their age. Only a few children are joining words to make simple statements. One higher attaining child wrote, 'The men march' in response to learning about 'The Grand Old Duke of York'. The higher attaining children, about one quarter of the class, handle books correctly and read simple words and short sentences correctly. The majority of the children are

at the early stages of reading; a few do not read as yet. The children are making good progress from a very low starting point in this area of their learning. The majority of the children are likely to be still well below expected levels for their age with only one quarter of them reaching the levels expected.

Mathematical development:

45. Children's mathematical skills are still developing from a very poor base. They are making good progress and from knowing very few of the numbers on entry to the reception year, about one half of the children know the numbers up to ten and correctly match objects to numbers. This leaves many children who are still learning how to use numbers and match them to objects and vice versa. As a result of the poor writing and drawing skills, number formation is in need of development for a few children. The teacher shows good skills in teaching children counting techniques. The children counted on the palm of their hands tapping out the number of toy animals they saw in their numeracy session. By the end of the lesson, most were able to count the toy animals from one to ten. Higher attaining children, about one quarter of the class, counted and ordered all the numbers up to ten with ease. The teacher has adjusted her planning to accommodate these children's mathematical needs in order to challenge and extend their learning effectively. In other areas of mathematical development, most children can use the comparisons in measurement correctly. They use 'longer than', 'shorter than' and 'taller than', in comparing objects on a worksheet. In the review of previous learning on shapes, higher attaining children readily recall sphere and cylinder as solid shapes about which they have learned. The teacher and the assistants are skilled in reinforcing mathematical language in reviewing learning. This helps the children to consolidate knowledge and understanding in their mathematical development. Overall, considering the number of pupils with special educational needs in the class, a minority are in line to meet expected levels by the time they complete the reception year. Generally, standards are likely to be well below those expected.

Knowledge and understanding of the world:

46. Children are making good progress, and about one half are likely to reach the expected level by the end of the reception year. This means that, even when taking into account the high number of children with special educational needs in this year group, overall standards are likely to be only just below the expectation for this age group. The children are encouraged to be inquisitive and explore, especially in their structured play areas in the classroom. All children get opportunities to design money containers in their art and design sessions. They work slowly, concentrating well and most achieve a satisfactory standard. However, the progress of a significant minority of the children is hindered by their having poor cutting and fixing skills. In one lesson, the teacher challenged the children to recall events in the recent past at the school, and to place photographs in sequence to show when they happened. This proved a real challenge for many, but they learned the early stages of a historical timeline effectively. One area of notable progress and development in this focus of learning is when children find out about the main external features of the body and how to look after themselves. The teacher gave good opportunities in one lesson for children to share ideas and, as a result, they made good progress in learning the science of their bodies as well as developing their speaking and listening skills. In an analysis of previous work recorded in their workbooks, the majority of pupils show that they know most of the external features of the human body. This is a good level of achievement for children of this age. Children are provided with good opportunities to develop their computer skills in a session focusing on sequencing pictures and predicting what has happened to objects, such as a half-eaten apple. Most children show sound mouse control skills being able to click on 'yes', 'no' and 'select a picture'.

Physical development:

47. Children's progress is at least sound. Many hold pencils and crayons correctly, but their control skills are not developed well enough at this stage of their learning. The higher attaining children manipulate construction pieces well in producing models. The skills of lower attaining children are enhanced when they are given opportunities to use construction pieces in sessions. A significant minority of children do not show appropriate control over such things as scissors, glue and paint brushes in their art and design lessons. In a musical movement lesson in the classroom, children showed the ability to stretch, twist and turn and use their imagination effectively in acting out scenes from 'The Snowman'. In this lesson, the teacher made good provision for the development of children's spiritual and social awareness. The children do not have a separate enclosed playground area, but still manage to get good exercise in sharing the infant playground each day. About one half of the children are likely to achieve the expected level by the end of the year.

Creative development:

48. Children are making good progress. They enjoy learning about and practising rhythms and patterns in their musical activities. In one lesson observed, the children worked extremely well in groups, discussing which parts of the body to select to make sounds and form patterns. Most children could make simple patterns tapping and clapping. Higher attaining children were effective in putting sequences of repeated patterns together. These children made very good progress and achieved well. The teacher helped to raise all children's self-esteem by applauding and praising each group after they performed their work to the rest of the class. Children develop their creative skills in painting and modelling, but because of their underdeveloped control skills, many children need the additional support of an assistant to achieve the finished product of their work. Overall, the majority of the children will not reach the expected level for their age in this area of learning by the end of the reception year; the standard being below expectation due to underdeveloped control skills.

ENGLISH

- **Pupils' attainment in English at the end of Years 2 and 6 is well below average. This was reflected in the most recent national tests in 2002 when attainment was deemed to be very low, both in comparison to national averages and schools with a similar intake. However, pupils achieve well in relation to their prior learning given their very low starting points, making good progress across Years 1 to 6. This includes the higher attaining pupils. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 have declined since the last inspection. This must be placed within context, however, with the number of pupils with special educational needs having doubled since the last inspection with six out of ten pupils being on the school's list of special educational needs.**

Major strengths are:

49. **Pupils make good progress in their speaking and listening skills.** The large majority of pupils enter Year 1 with poor oral skills, lacking both the vocabulary and confidence to speak in anything like a structured speaking situation. Teachers respond to this in a positive manner by giving pupils regular opportunities to talk about their work both at the beginning and end of lessons. The majority of pupils in Years 1 and 2 are good listeners and are keen to make some oral contribution to lessons. Structured play also makes a positive contribution to pupils' speaking skills. Despite these good learning opportunities, pupils' oral skills at the end of Year 2 remain below average.

Pupils continue to make good progress in their social oral skills between Year 3 and 6, although many pupils still lack the confidence and skills to express their ideas in anything like a formal situation. Teachers give pupils regular chances to discuss their work in paired and small group activities. Whilst this promotes good learning opportunities, teachers do not always ensure that questions are directed to all members of the class, thereby not assuring inclusion for all.

50. **Pupils achieve well in their reading skills.** A significant number of pupils arrive at school with a very limited knowledge of picture books, and the ability to make sense of words on the page. The school uses a good commercial phonic scheme to promote pupils' learning in word-building skills, with classroom teachers and assistants giving good one-to-one support to pupils in their reading of books from the structured reading scheme. Despite these good learning opportunities, standards in reading at the end of Year 2 remain well below average. Pupils continue to make good progress in their reading skills as they move through Years 3 to 6. They are less secure, however, in their reading comprehension skills. This was observed on a number of occasions when listening to pupils read in the upper school, in that they made few mistakes when reading their books, but did not always understand what they were actually reading. Teachers respond to this issue in a positive manner through the regular use of guided reading and opportunities for pupils to engage in silent reading activities. Despite this good provision, attainment in reading at the end of Year 6 remains well below average. Although many pupils are able to retrieve information from individual factual books, they are less secure in their ability to find their way around a library in order to gather information and engage in personal research.
51. **Pupils' writing skills and the quality of their written work improves over time.** Many pupils, in particular the significant number of pupils with special educational needs, arrive at school with poor handwriting skills. In some cases pupils are capable of only making meaningful marks on the page. Teachers spend an appropriate amount of time on focusing on pencil control skills and getting pupils to copy letters and words. Over time pupils develop the ability to work in an independent manner and to link words together in order to make sentences. As pupils become more confident in their writing skills they start to write about events in their daily lives and retell, in a written manner, the stories read to them in class. Despite the good learning taking place, standards in written work at the end of Year 2 remain well below average. Pupils continue to make good progress in their writing skills as they move from Years 3 to 6. Pupils develop a satisfactory range of basic skills and develop their ability to read for information and to respond in a written manner in a number of comprehension activities. Pupils engage in a satisfactory range of writing activities. They produce a number of descriptive, instructional and creative essays, write formal and informal letters, create character studies and produce some sensitive poetry. Handwriting and presentation are generally good, although most pupils do not begin to write in ink until part way through Year 6. Despite this sound provision standards in written work by the time pupils reach Year 6 remain well below average.
52. **The overall quality of teaching is good with some very good teaching being observed during the inspection.** The school has responded well to the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, with teachers interpreting and applying the literacy hour in an effective manner. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils so that pupils have a clear understanding of what they are learning, and why. Work is modified to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, although occasions were observed where the actual activities for higher attainers were insufficiently challenging. Time targets are often used to ensure that pupils stay on task and that the lesson moves along in a brisk and animated manner. This makes a positive contribution to learning. The final

part of lessons is used in an effective manner to check on what pupils have learnt, and to share and celebrate what pupils have achieved. The good progress observed in most lessons is very much influenced by pupils' positive attitudes towards work and their wish to learn. Pupils work with sustained interest and concentration and obviously wish to please their teachers. Behaviour ranged from good to very good in all lessons.

53. **Leadership and management in the subject are good.** The subject leader is aware of the need to raise standards, and has already addressed a number of such issues in the subject development plan. The school has good overall plans to support teachers in the structuring and delivery of their lessons. These include the use of ICT to improve presentation of work and to develop writing skills. The subject uses a good range of assessment procedures with all pupils having targets for improvement in their learning. The amount of homework set is satisfactory.

Areas for improvement include:

54. **There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to improve the quality of their written work and to write for a wider range of purposes and in different styles.** Although pupils plan their work well, often through the use of writing frames, there are too few opportunities to use redrafting skills in order to improve the quality of their written work. Therefore, they do not always learn to appreciate how they might change the content, structure and style or how to use more imaginative language. The majority of written work produced by pupils is of a literacy nature. There are few opportunities for pupils to learn how language and the written word can be used to convey information in different styles and for different purposes, such as reports, or the language of the media, including advertising, newspapers, pamphlets and brochures. Although pupils develop satisfactory basic English skills, a number of these activities are carried out in isolation. This is rather than using these activities within a meaningful writing activity, such as the inclusion of adjectives within a descriptive essay, or the use of verbs and adverbs within a sports report.
55. **There is no opportunity for pupils to read whole texts as a class.** Pupils read a satisfactory range of extracts from different books, with the exception of short stories, within guided reading activities. This does not provide pupils with the opportunity to improve their reading skills or help to develop good reading habits, particularly for those pupils who read little at home. It does not provide a good stimulus for a wider range of writing opportunities.
56. **The school does not currently have a policy or strategies for the development of literacy across the curriculum.** As a result, there are missed opportunities for pupils to improve the quality of work within such subjects as history and geography.

MATHEMATICS

- **Standards in mathematics in Year 6 are very low and similar to those reached in last year's 2002 national tests. Standards are not as high as at the time of the previous inspection, but the school now has double the number of pupils with special educational needs. Achievement is good, given the very low starting point.**

Strengths are:

57. **Teaching and learning are good.** Teachers prepare good quality lessons that focus very clearly on the learning of basic skills in line with the needs of the pupils. The

quality of teaching and learning is better now than at the time of the previous inspection, with a small number of very good lessons, where learning is also very good. Questioning is used skilfully to help pupils to think. Teachers are not happy to accept a simple answer – pupils are required to explain how they arrived at their answers. This helps others in the class to learn more effectively. When asked how to add on in nines, most Year 3 pupils were able to say that they would add on ten and subtract one. However, in Year 6, where the ability level is especially low, some pupils had difficulty understanding how to take £20 away from £200 on a discounted sofa when problem solving. Only the higher attainers were able to recognise this as a ten per cent reduction before it was carefully explained by the teacher. Teachers know their pupils very well and, as a result, form very good working relationships in classrooms. This leads in turn to a good, productive working atmosphere. One of the great benefits to learning is the deployment of learning support assistants for pupils who have specific learning difficulties or who need an extra push to make the jump up to the next level of understanding. Working in full and effective partnership with teachers, these support staff work with smaller groups on learning basic facts and skills, leaving the teacher free to pick up on other problems with different pupils. This works extremely well and is responsible for much of the good progress made, especially by higher attaining pupils.

58. **Planning is good.** The school has effectively adopted the National Numeracy Strategy and combined it successfully with the LEA proposals for teaching mathematics. All staff have had recent training and plan good quality lessons that meet the needs of pupils well. There is a high emphasis placed on the teaching of basic skills, especially in Years 1 and 2 where pupils have very poor skills in this area. However, a good balance is kept with the other areas of shape, space and measures and problem solving and, in Years 3 to 6, with data and graph work. This is an improvement since the school was previously inspected.
59. **Subject leadership is good.** The subject leader has a good grasp of the subject and monitors her colleagues' planning and teaching on a regular basis with a view to raising standards and progress. Individual targets are set, especially in Year 6 where they are effective in giving pupils a clear goal for which to aim. Still in their infancy, the school is hoping that these will help to raise awareness in pupils of where they are at their weakest and what to do in order to improve. Early indications are that this is working effectively. It is planned to extend this scheme to the rest of the school.
60. **Achievement is good.** The starting point in mathematics for the majority of pupils is very poor indeed. Some cannot recognise numbers when they start the National Curriculum in Year 1. Others have little or no idea of odd or even numbers. Numbers are very poorly formed with frequent mistakes such as reversed numbers five or three. Given this low level, by Year 6 pupils have made significant gains in their knowledge and understanding. About one half recognise and classify two and three-dimensional shapes by Year 2; their ability to add up and subtract improves as they enter Year 3, so that they learn to round up or down in order to make addition or subtraction simpler and more accurate. Most pupils make good progress in understanding the difficult concept of angles with, for instance, the higher attainers beginning to recognise the sum totals of angles in a triangle. By Year 6, although attainment levels are still very low, the progress in developing strategies for solving problems, recognising patterns of numbers and understanding the nature of shapes and their measurement have all improved considerably. Despite this, pupils' very poor retention of facts over even short periods of time causes them significant disadvantage in national tests. ICT is being used to enhance learning through the production of bar graphs and charts. Levels of homework are appropriate.

Areas for development:

61. **Standards are very low.** The school has suffered from low standards over the past four years, and these are lower than when the school was previously inspected, especially in numeracy. Other areas are about the same. Most pupils begin learning from an extremely low starting point and struggle with the simplest of concepts, such as sequencing numbers or recognising patterns of numbers. When asked to shade in odd or even numbers on a line of numbers, some Year 1 pupils were unable to follow the simple sequence. Others in Year 2 could not sequence the months of the year, some because they were unable to read the words properly. Such basic disadvantage has a depressing effect throughout the school despite the very hard work of staff to move pupils towards their targets.

62. **Many pupils misinterpret test questions and have poor retention skills.** Towards the end of their time in school, despite good progress in other areas of mathematics, many pupils have great difficulty solving problems, due to misinterpretation of questions. For example, when Year 6 pupils were asked to work out the age of the mother given that the daughter was 18 and the mother was 28 years older, a significant number fumbled with the wording and ended up with ten, taking 18 from 28. It took some carefully explained phrases and working out from the teacher before the penny dropped and, even then, some were still confused. This low level of interpretation and poor retention of knowledge causes major problems for pupils in national tests, where the results are constantly low despite permitted additional help being available during the tests. Currently, staff follow a syllabus that moves from one area of mathematics to another after a few weeks. This really disadvantages some pupils with poor memories. For example, their work shows that when they have just begun to grasp how to do long division, they move on to shapes and their properties. When a few weeks later they return to division, they have forgotten most of it, and their work is full of basic mistakes. The lack of a clear policy on extending and supporting numeracy skills across the curriculum does not help these pupils with poorer memories.

SCIENCE

- **Although standards in science are well below average in Years 2 and 6, they are at a slightly higher level than those found at the time of the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils doing better than expected in Year 6 has increased. This represents good achievement over time.**

The strengths of the subject are:

63. **Achievement is good.** Only two lessons were seen during the course of the inspection. However, an interview with the subject leader, scrutiny of pupils' workbooks, discussion with pupils and work on display indicates that progress in all classes is at least satisfactory, and for many pupils it is good. This judgement is made for all pupils, including the higher attainers. Approximately one quarter of all pupils did better than expected in last year's national tests at the end of Year 6. This is a strict comparison of those pupils who were also present for the teacher assessments in Year 2, four years earlier. The remaining pupils made satisfactory progress, and this judgement includes the significant number arriving part way between Years 3 and 6, and whose education has been interrupted. Parents commented favourably on the way in which new pupils were enabled to settle in quickly, and these statistics bear further evidence to that positive quality.

64. **Attainment in experimental and investigative skills has improved.** Since the last inspection planning of the science curriculum has been improved and now identifies more opportunities for pupils to actively participate in their own learning. For example, in their study of light, Year 6 pupils predict which materials might or might not let light through. They conduct experiments, testing their ideas out and then record the evidence. Such activities captivate pupils' attention, focus their thinking and enable them to make good progress in these areas.
65. **Monitoring and evaluation of science are now good.** The subject leader and headteacher observe teachers' planning and work in classrooms. This has contributed to the high quality of teaching and continuity in approach, which results in the good rate of pupils' learning. End-of-year assessments are used to find elements of the subject in need of improvement and appropriate action is then taken. Homework is set for pupils in Year 6, which is an extension of work done in classes, and helps to reinforce learning. In this way, parents are able to contribute to their children's progress.
66. **The subject encourages the development of numeracy and literacy skills effectively.** Teachers and support assistants explain important points carefully to pupils, then ask searching questions to check their understanding. Pupils in Year 2 are keen to talk about the need for a balanced diet to keep us healthy, and how they might record findings of surveys mathematically. The responses of pupils are becoming more detailed and they learn to use scientific vocabulary such as 'opaque', 'transparent' and 'translucent' appropriately and confidently. Pupils are also able to talk knowledgeably about readings they have taken from a force meter, and they use their numeracy skills well to record their findings accurately on graphs.

The area for improvement is:

67. **There are insufficient resources.** The school's stock of resources is insufficient. Pupils do not have immediate access to an adequate supply of equipment to further develop their learning.

ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- **Standards are average in both subjects by Year 6. Overall, standards have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils achieve well in relation to their prior learning, making good progress from Years 1 to 6.**

The main strengths are:

68. **Pupils make good progress in their art and design and design and technology skills and produce work of a satisfactory standard.** Many pupils arrive at school with poorly developed hand and finger control. They have to learn how to handle a pencil or paintbrush effectively, and to develop eye-to-hand co-ordination when controlling scissors and other simple tools. Evidence from work on display in classrooms and in pupils' portfolios of work indicates that pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress within a range of art and design activities. Pupils draw simple self-portraits in pencil and use paint in an effective manner to create full-length portraits of their parents linked to the theme of 'The Family'. They engage in stencilling activities on both paper and cloth, and take part in simple weaving activities. Pupils in Year 1 were able to identify a range of shapes in various buildings in a design and technology lesson as they explored the class topic of 'homes'. Pupils put this knowledge to good effect as they sketched homes of their own using such shapes as squares, oblongs and triangles making good links with mathematics. Pupils continue to explore a range of media and extend their artistic skills within Years 3 to 6. Pupils learn to understand

how different colours can be created through colour mixing activities, and use these skills as they create landscape pictures based upon a specific colour. Pupils develop their observational skills well as they draw a range of natural objects. Occasional opportunities are given to consider art and design from other cultures and traditions, with pupils producing some interesting Indian patterns. Pupils in the upper school have produced some good quality wall hangings. Pupils in Year 3 make satisfactory progress in their design and technology skills as they begin a project on the creation of photo frames. Progress is helped by the teacher's good use of resources as pupils consider how a range of photo frames in different materials have been constructed and what contributed towards their stability. Pupils in Year 4 designed chairs for a specific type of person. However, the focus was on the sketching of chairs, rather than producing a particular design brief that highlighted stages in construction and the use of materials. Some good quality work was seen on display in the corridor when pupils constructed a number of models of plates of food, made from a range of materials. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 also design a number of containers and packages, with evidence that pupils have taken a number of commercially produced packages apart in order to study their construction. Pupils in the upper school engaged in an excellent project involving both subjects last year when they produced a full-scale Chinese dragon to use in their celebration of the Chinese New Year.

69. **Pupils display positive attitudes towards their activities and work with sustained concentration.** Pupils listen with interest to their teachers, follow their instructions and are keen to improve the quality of their work. Pupils treat all tools and materials in a safe and sensible manner.
70. **The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some good teaching being observed during the period of the inspection.** It is not possible to make a secure judgement on the quality of teaching in art and design, in view of the fact that no lessons were observed. There is some evidence from the work produced by pupils that teachers give pupils the opportunity to explore and use a range of art media and that lessons are well planned, organised and resourced. Teaching in design and technology is likewise well planned, organised and managed. Teachers' good exposition and clear instructions at the beginning of lessons ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of the activities to be carried out and the skills to be developed. Teachers focus on constructional techniques and give pupils the opportunity to take some control of their own learning by deciding on their own interpretation of the design of the finished product.

Areas for improvement:

71. **Increase the range of art and design opportunities offered to pupils.** Much of the artwork produced by pupils focuses on drawing and painting with some printing and stencilling. There are currently too few opportunities for pupils to engage in such areas as collage, textiles and ceramics. There are also very few opportunities for pupils to consider the paintings of accepted artists and to use this experience to produce paintings of their own.
72. **Ensure that pupils follow the design process in full.** It is not always possible to differentiate those activities considered art and design from those considered as design and technology. There is currently insufficient emphasis on ensuring that pupils plan their design and technology activities in full. This includes the detailed sequencing of construction methods, the selection and use of materials, the drawing of objects to scale and the evaluation of the finished product.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

- **Standards by the end of both Years 2 and 6 are broadly in line with the expected levels in both subjects. This represents very good achievement by pupils and is a similar finding to that of the previous inspection report.**

Strengths are:

73. **There is consistently good development of skills in both subjects.** There is a good focus on developing essential and basic skills in both subjects and pupils' progress is good. For example, in a history lesson on the Tudor period, where Year 5 pupils investigate why the marriages of King Henry VIII failed, they learn to extract information from portraits of Anne of Cleves, the fourth wife. They gain an understanding that she was divorced because Henry found her unattractive. In both subjects, all pupils are given good opportunities to ask and answer questions and offer their opinions. All staff, including learning support assistants, enjoy very good relationships with pupils and regularly praise them for their efforts, helping to motivate pupils and improve their learning.
74. **Pupils are well behaved and have good attitudes to their work.** This contributes significantly to the progress they make. For instance, in a geography lesson, pupils in Year 3 worked well in pairs as they made and justified decisions as to the best location for holidays. They take their work seriously, as they sift through travel brochures, noting temperature and rainfall charts and the location of hotels to ensure that the requirements of fictitious clients are suitably met. Their knowledge and understanding of different places develop well as they use atlases to find places on the world map. In a history lesson in Year 6 on wartime evacuees, pupils' good listening skills and positive attitudes promoted better learning through debate and discussion.
75. **Pupils are provided with good opportunities to make links with other curriculum areas.** In their study of how an island is different from a mainland, pupils in Year 2 confidently demonstrated their skills in ICT as they created a map of Struay, an imaginary island off the coast of Scotland. By dragging and clicking, they included features of boats, sheep, hills and a post office, but consigned the option of a factory to the 'bin' as they realised the island would not have had sufficient people living on it to make a factory worthwhile. The pace of this lesson was brisk and pupils were so engrossed in the lesson that they were disappointed when it was time to finish, and learning was good.
76. **Fieldwork investigations outside the classroom are used effectively to enhance learning.** Pupils in Year 6 are able to bring their experience of a residential visit to Low Bank Ground, near Lake Coniston to complement their understanding of a contrasting locality in a major National Park. They use the art of persuasive writing successfully as they use their knowledge of the region around Grasmere to convince a reader of the popularity of the area. They promote 'fantastic scenery' and the facilities of the lakes for fishing and canoeing as advantages. Disadvantages they cite are the busy roads and limited parking. They correctly identify the names of motorways and major roads that lead to the Lake District. Such experiences at first hand deepen pupils' awareness of the value of investigation and help them to understand more readily the implications of what they learn in a practical sense. In the same area, pupils' learning in history is enhanced as they visit old cottages to see what lifestyles were like in Victorian times.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- **Overall, standards in information communication technology in Year 2 are average and for Year 6 they are below average. However, progress is good for all pupils, the majority of whom have special educational needs. Considering the change in the overall ability of the pupils and the present progress being made this is a good improvement since the previous inspection, when standards for pupils throughout the school were below average**

The strengths of the subject are:

77. **Provision for ICT has improved extremely well;** this was an issue raised at the previous inspection. There is now a dedicated room with an interactive board and 16 computers and there is a computer in each classroom. The computer suite facility is a result of very good fund-raising through the hard work of the school, parents, governors and the community in providing this resource for children's education. Overall, there have been many improvements since the previous inspection and the school has the capacity to improve further, with pupils on line to achieve higher standards.
78. **Pupils are making good progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills.** By the end of Year 2, most pupils' skills in mouse control and using a computer keyboard are sound. In a Year 2 geography lesson, pupils use an ICT program, 'My World Island', to create a map of an imaginary island on their computer screens. Using sound 'click and drag' skills, they are able to build up features and discard ones they do not need by 'clicking and dragging' into the 'bin'. All pupils make good progress, learning new ICT skills as well as skills in geography, building on their knowledge and understanding of both subjects. In discussions with Year 2 pupils it is clear that higher attaining and average attaining pupils are making good and better progress in using a variety of tools for purpose. They readily recall the use of a program 'Colour Magic' to produce Christmas cards. They describe how to use the computer paintbrush, spray can and fill-in tool to produce their cards. Pupils in Year 6 build well on their computer skills with the majority now using the Internet with confidence to access information to support work in English, mathematics, art and design, geography, history and religious education. Pupils in Year 6 discussed using an Internet program, that simulated times in The Victorian Period. They recalled searching for the toilet in the house and being amazed to find that it was outside in a separate little building. These pupils are making good progress in this area of ICT focus. Currently, they are learning the skills of 'multimedia' presentations to support their work in a study of Grasmere.
79. **Improved teaching is having a positive impact on learning throughout the school.** The quality of teaching in ICT is never less than sound and in small group teaching sessions it is good. The teaching of computer skills has improved since the previous inspection, as a result of training, and this is having a positive effect on pupils' learning and their achievement. This was seen to be most effective in the teaching of a mathematics lesson when using the 'Easy Teach Maths' computer program, for pupils who have greater needs than others in their year groups. Good teaching meant pupils quickly learned the skill of moving numbers and signs around the screen to achieve problems set for them.
80. **Good and sometimes very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils lead to better learning.** Pupils have positive attitudes in lessons and their behaviour is good. They work well individually and when asked to work in pairs or groups. The co-operative learning situations make a positive contribution to pupils' social development

and they show respect for the equipment they use, showing very good moral standards. Pupils are keen to learn, and settle very quickly to tasks following teachers' direct teaching of skills and instructions.

81. **Good leadership and teacher training are contributing to rising standards.** The subject is well led and managed. The subject leader has organised and carried out all the training for the teaching staff. This training is having a big impact, as teachers have acquired the necessary computer skills. Their confidence in teaching ICT has been raised as a result. This means the quality of teaching is rising along with the standards and achievement of pupils. Portfolios of pupils' work are being built up and assessment systems to monitor progress and achievement are being developed. Good safety procedures are in place, which include a clear 'Internet Access' policy ensuring that pupils are protected from inappropriate Internet sites.

Areas for improvement are:

82. **The computer suite does not have adequate ventilation.** The computer suite quickly gets hot when full classes of pupils use it. It is not always appropriate to open side windows due to lighting interference on the screens; seen at least twice during the inspection. Investigating the installation of a system of air-conditioning might be advantageous in overcoming the present problem.
83. **To plan for pupils to use email communications, more use of control aspects of ICT and acquiring additional sensors and probes.** Pupils' standards are not high enough by the end of Year 6, as they do not have sufficient opportunities to explore all areas of exchanging and sharing information. They do not have enough knowledge and understanding of the control aspects within ICT and they do not use probes and sensors to support the measurement of temperature, light and sound in lessons such as geography and science.

MUSIC AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

84. **Pupils reach average standards by the end of Year 6, having made good progress over time. Standards in physical education have been maintained since the last inspection, but improved upon in music.**

Strengths in the subjects include:

85. **Pupils make good progress over time and reach satisfactory standards overall.** In physical education, pupils in Year 1 make a good start by learning to develop an effective understanding of spatial awareness and a need to be concerned for the well-being of others, as they 'travel' around the hall in different ways and at different speeds. The teacher's focus on checking heartbeat and the rate of breathing at the beginning and end of the lesson made a valuable contribution to pupils' learning in their science work on the theme of 'My Body'. In music, similar aged pupils learn the value of developing their listening skills in readiness for identifying soft and loud notes, or high and low pitch. Pupils in Year 2 develop sound eye-to-hand co-ordination as they engage in a number of beanbag games in physical education. The good progress observed in this lesson was much influenced by pupils' very sensible approach to their work and their ability to work in a collaborative manner with their partners. In music in Year 2, pupils begin to acquire the skills of composing simple rhythms and to explore the different sounds of instruments.
86. **The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.** In physical education, most of the teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features. In music, the quality of teaching and learning is somewhat better with more consistently good

teaching. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed. Teachers focus on health and safety issues in physical education. There are good warm-up activities in both subjects. This element of the lesson makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning and a greater understanding of breathing, posture and control. Regular opportunities are given for pupils to display good practice in physical education. This increases positive attitudes to learning and the overall quality of work. Pupils are given the opportunity to improve their skills through repeating activities within more demanding situations in music and physical education. In music, this involves continual practise of hymns until the teacher is satisfied that the emphasis and tone are appropriate. In physical education, this involves pupils extending their gymnastic skills in Year 4 as they travel under and over a range of medium-level equipment, whilst using a number of shapes and balances. This enhances learning and the development of skills. Pupils evaluate their own and others' efforts in both subjects and come to appreciate how learning can be improved.

87. **There are opportunities for pupils to extend and improve their skills within a good range of extra-curricular activities.** The school provides pupils with the opportunity to take part in a number of additional sporting activities including football, netball and rounders, with athletics and cricket taking place in the summer term. Pupils also take part in inter-school competitions. All pupils in Years 5 and 6 are given the chance to go on a five-day residential holiday, when they take part in a number of water and other sporting activities. The school also benefits through coaching and other activities, from their links with the Wigan Warriors Rugby League Club and the Wigan Athletic Football Club. Music specialists visit the school regularly and provide a range of instrumental tuition, including strings, woodwind and keyboard. A choir is formed to take part in the regular, local music festivals as well as seasonal church activities. Pupils gain considerably in self-esteem and social skills from these good opportunities for public involvement and performance. In both subjects, with their emphasis on the need to work together and co-operate, a valuable contribution is made towards pupils' social and personal development. The sound progress in a Year 4 gymnastics lesson owed much to pupils' good self-discipline and the ability to focus on the skills to be developed.
88. **Aspects of leadership and management in both subjects are good.** The school benefits from the good subject knowledge and enthusiastic teaching of the joint co-ordinators for PE who teach two-thirds of the PE lessons in the school. In music, there is a degree of subject specialist teaching. The degree of teacher confidence has improved due to staff training and a good quality syllabus for pupils to follow.

Areas for improvement and development:

89. **Resources in physical education and music are insufficient overall.** On occasions, teachers need to borrow music resources from the high school, causing inconvenience and wasting valuable time. In physical education, there is a lack of some basic equipment such as benches and mats. In both subjects, these missing elements impinge on learning adversely. Satisfactory development in gymnastic skills was observed in Year 3 as pupils sequenced a series of twists, turns and balances as they moved across the floor. Although pupils achieved well in these skills, their overall progress was inhibited by a lack of resources, with pairs and groups of pupils being able to use only one small mat each for their activities.

90. **Only 50 per cent of pupils achieve the requirement of swimming 25 metres by the end of Year 6.** Pupils visit the baths for one term each year. Few, if any, pupils continue with swimming on their own outside school. This is an unsatisfactory statistic, bearing in mind the government's requirements.